

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

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APPROVED BY HA:MLSCHNEIDER
ARA:SSHELTON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USMISSION GENEVA
INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: SHUM, ES

SUBJECT:ICRC REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON SCHNEIDER-SHELTON
TRIP TO EL SALVADOR

1. ICRC GENERAL DELEGATE FOR LATIN AMERICA SERGE NESSI
HAS ASKED FOR INFO ON RECENT VISIT TO EL SALVADOR BY STATE
DEPARTMENT DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARIES MARK SCHNEIDER (HA)
AND SALLY SHELTON (ARA).

2. MISSION SHOULD DRAW ON FOLLOWING MATERIAL TO BRIEF
NESSI ON THIS SUBJECT, MAKING CLEAR THAT THIS IS DRAWN
FROM A CONFIDENTIAL REPORT ON THEIR MIS-
SION, AND THAT THE INFORMATION AND CONCLUSIONS SHOULD BE
HELD IN CONFIDENCE.

3. WE ARE SEPARATELY POUCHING FOR NESSI COPIES OF RECENT
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT ON EL SALVADOR AND RECENTLY
ISSUED REPORT ON "HUMAN RIGHTS IN EL SALVADOR -- 1978" BY
REP. ROBERT DRINAN (U. S. CONGRESS), JOHN J. MCAWARD, AND
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PROF. THOMAS P. ANDERSON, PUBLISHED BY UNITARIAN UNIVER-
SALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE IN BOSTON.

4. BEGIN TEXT: SCHNEIDER AND SHELTON VISITED EL SALVADOR
IN RESPONSE TO THE EL SALVADOR GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST TO

PRESENT ITS CASE ON RECENT CHARGES OF HUMAN RIGHTS

VIOLATIONS. THE TWO OFFICIALS MET WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT, FOUR MINISTERS, AND THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF. THEY ALSO MET WITH CHURCH, POLITICAL OPPOSITION, AND PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERS, AND VISITED A RURAL AREA WHERE ARMED CLASHES BETWEEN A GOVERNMENT-DIRECTED PARAMILITARY GROUP AND LEFTIST ORGANIZATIONS HAD OCCURRED. THE CONFRONTATIONS HAVE PRODUCED SEVERAL DEATHS, A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF WOUNDED AND PERHAPS 60-100 DETAINEES. SCHNEIDER AND SHELTON HEARD ACCOUNTS OF TORTURE BY THE NATIONAL GUARD AND THE PARAMILITARY GROUP, AND REPORTS OF DEATHS OR DISAPPEARANCES OF PEASANTS SUSPECTED OF SYMPATHIZING WITH OR PARTICIPATING IN OPPOSITION POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS.

SCHNEIDER AND SHELTON CONCLUDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT ACTED TO HALT REPRESSIVE PRACTICES OF THE SECURITY FORCES OR THEIR PARAMILITARY ALLIES IN RURAL AREAS, ALTHOUGH IT HAS AVOIDED CONFRONTATIONS IN THE MOST RECENT URBAN DEMONSTRATIONS. THEY FOUND GROWING POLARIZATION WITHIN THE SOCIETY, SHARP DIVISIONS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE AND WITHIN THE CHURCH, A SENSE THAT ELECTORAL FRAUD AND RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES HAD UNDERMINED FAITH IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM, AND A SUBSEQUENT INCREASE IN SYMPATHY AMONG THE RURAL POOR FOR LEFTIST ORGANIZATIONS. SOME GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS RECOGNIZED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES EXIST BUT ASSERTED THAT THEY DO NOT REFLECT

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GOVERNMENT POLICY. THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES THE OVERWHELMING REALITY OF POVERTY UNDERLYING THE GROWTH IN POLITICAL INSTABILITY, AND IS PUTTING TOGETHER A PROGRAM OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THE PROGRAM WILL MAKE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ROOT CAUSES OF EL SALVADOR'S POVERTY. END TEXT. VANCE

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